

~ Let's Make This Clear ~

by Red Hope

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Copyright: Xena, Gabrielle, and Argo belong to Universal and company. But I own Joseph, Rhigos, Harris, and the story line.

Violence: Maybe be some later on... we'll see.

Subtext/Sex: Definitely subtext... sex that's sketchy. I doubt that there will be... but who knows. ;-)

Time Frame: This is somewhere in the third season I'd say.

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Series Three: **Putting the Puzzle Together** Story: **Thirteen**

Section One

~*Part 1*~

Gabrielle dropped her head back as a deep moan escaped her lips. Her hands came down to glide over a wet stomach. Her eyes blurred over so she closed them. Her body continued to rock up and down with more sweat covering her body. Soon she felt small hands cover her breasts to kneed them. She opened her eyes and gazed down into passionate brown ones. A grin creased her lips.

The young man's lips curled into that same grin as he kept thrusting his hips up into Gabrielle.

The bard stole herself into the feeling of the small hands working her breasts along with the deep furry soaring through her body. Another deep moan escaped her with her eyes closing. She whispered, "Faster."

Suddenly the tempo between the two young couple went faster in the bed. And within a few moments they were at their peak and it left Gabrielle screaming.

After that, the bard fell down into the young man.

The man carefully pulled Gabrielle in to hold her tightly. He kissed her forehead and took calming breaths.

Slowly the small woman opened her eyes still heavily breathing. "Oh gods, that was... good Joseph."

Joseph chuckled a little then shut his eyes. "Glad it was." He took a shaky breath. "But I better go before your friend shows up."

The bard tightened her arms. "It's alright. Xena will be gone for awhile." She kissed the young man gently. "Let's at least catch our breaths huh?" She sighed very deeply

with sadness. Certain emotions were arising inside of her again, emotions that only dealt with her and Xena. That's one thing sex with others could never do for her, stop her burning desires for Xena.

Joseph quietly laughed as he lay resting in the woman's arms. However he noticed the deep sigh. He still felt a little fear coursing through him. He'd seen Xena himself and knew what would happen to him if he were caught with this bard. He knew they weren't together but he also saw that the Warrior Princess laid silent claims to Gabrielle. "I hope you're right." A small grin had creased his lips. "I don't feel like having your friend make me feel like two inches tall."

"How could she do that?" Gabrielle patted the man's still hot chest. "You're short as it is."

Joseph laughed lightly. "Not as short as you." He breathed deeply.

"Don't rub it in." The bard groaned a little. She could finally feel her body cooling down in the room of the tavern.

Joseph, well he was, as we knew, young and around Gabrielle's age. Short, as we knew too, with curly brown hair that went to his shoulders. He was fairly muscular and very handsome with a high intelligence. He was an everyday farmer in the village that helped his father on the farm. On this night he happened to be in the right tavern, on the right night, at the right time. All of that led to him having sex with a woman of his age he knew he'd never see again. Yet it was more than worth it. "Okay, let's get up."

The small woman groaned, lifted her head up, and kissed the man warmly. "Alright."

Boot steps filled the air that was headed to Gabrielle's room.

The bard stiffened up, she knew that footfall. "Oh no," she whispered.

Joseph's heart pounded now. He was frozen where he lay in the bed with Gabrielle.

Gabrielle lifted her head towards the door when it swung open. Her expression dropped and her heart stopped.

Xena stood in the doorway, complete shock washed over her. She wasn't an easy person to surprise but this definitely did her in for a loop. She stared at the small couple's nude partially sweaty bodies that were entangled. "What in Hades?" she yelled.

The bard cringed. "Wait Xena, I can explain."

"Oh you don't need to." The warrior pointed a finger at the younger man. "You better run." Her eyes narrowed and filled with darkness.

Joseph didn't shift or let go of Gabrielle.

The Amazon Queen glanced to Xena then to Joseph. "Joseph, just get your things and go. You'll be fine, I promise."

The farmer slowly nodded and rolled out of the bed. The entire time he put his pants

on ice blue eyes were on him. The rest of his stuff he just hoisted into his arms.

The shock was wearing off Xena and her emotions were coming to life. She started to reach behind to her sword.

"Xena." Gabrielle was out of the bed with her hands out. The last thing she was thinking about was the fact she was nude. "Don't."

Joseph held his things tightly against his chest as he stared into primal blue eyes. He took a step back.

The Warrior Princess pulled her sword out of her sheath and took a menacing step towards the boy.

The bard moved to grasp Xena's arm. "Xena don't do this."

The warrior's next step never came. Gabrielle's voice was entangling her emotions.

"Joseph, leave." The small woman nodded to the farmer.

Joseph quickly moved to rush out the open door and out of the tavern.

The tall woman slowly closed her eyes as the hand released her arm. Her grip on the sword hilt left her hands pure white.

"Xena please." Gabrielle backed up to put her skirt on.

"What do you think you were doing?" Xena's voice was a forced calm and in a whisper. Her eyes slowly opened.

The younger woman took a shaky breath while putting her halter-top on. "You know what I was doing." She started tying her top. "You do it yourself Xena." She had a half anger look.

"There's a difference!" yelled the warrior. She sheathed her sword and spun on her heels to face her friend.

"How in Tartarus is that?" Gabrielle finished lacing her top and took a step towards the older woman. "You think I don't have needs either?"

"That's not what I'm talking about," Xena growled. "He could have done something to you."

"Oh he did do something Xena." The Amazon Queen was starting to yell now. She pointed a finger at the taller woman. "It's not like you don't sleep with strangers. So don't give me shit about it."

The warrior growled deeply now and stomped over to the door. Her fist met the doorway to leave a boom exploding. She turned back towards her friend. "You're right." She grasped the doorway. "I do sleep with strangers." Her eyes narrowed with darkness. "I think I might go find somebody to sleep with now. Since you've had your... sssatisfaction," she hissed coldly. She went out of the open door.

"Oh no." Gabrielle's eyes widen and she grabbed her boots to put them on hastily. She didn't tie them and went racing out the door after her partner. "Xena!" She went

racing down the steps almost falling down them.

The warrior was just going out of the tavern with a power walk. Her stride spoke of anger.

The bard ran through the tavern, out the door, jumped down the steps, and yelled, "Xena!"

"Stay away Gabrielle!" Xena didn't look back through the torch lit town. She kept walking with her ridged back.

The small woman sprinted and stepped into her friend's path. She faced the angry warrior. "Don't do this Xena." She held her hands up.

"Why?" The tall woman narrowed her eyes. "I do all the time, why not now?"

"Just because." Gabrielle shook her head. "Because I asked you not to."

"Like that means anything." The older woman tried side stepping Gabrielle.

The Amazon Queen didn't let it happen and stepped to her right to stop Xena. "Xena, I won't let you." She still kept her hands up.

"Get out of the way," snarled the warrior. "Or you can come watch." Her voiced seeped with bitterness.

The bard shook her head. "I don't think so." She narrowed her eyes with her stubbornness. "You're not going to do this."

Xena took a calming breath. She was at the brink of rage. Slowly she spoke in a calm warning tone. "Just move Gabrielle."

"No." Gabrielle saw the deep anger swirling in her friend's eyes. She knew this talking wasn't getting anywhere but making a deep hole. So she went to the next best thing she knew and that was love. She moved quickly and wrapped her arms around Xena. "Xena, please don't do this." She closed her eyes while digging her head into the tall woman's breasts.

The Warrior Princess dropped her head back while letting herself disappear into her friend's touch. She could only hope it would calm her anger. Her eyes shifted shut as her breathing became more level.

The bard just waited as she held tightly. Then she slowly felt strong arms circle around her and Xena's head lowered onto hers.

Xena took a shaky breath and whispered, "Let's go back into the room."

"Thank you." The young woman lifted her head with a sad smile. "I'll make the bed."

"You better." The warrior was dead serious. "I may sleep on the floor."

Gabrielle slowly nodded. She didn't want to disagree, she couldn't blame Xena nor did she want to fight more. She'd won the important battle. "Okay." She patted her partner's chest and stepped back. "Why don't you take a relaxing bath huh?"

The older woman only nodded and started walking back to the inn.

The bard followed behind.

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Gabrielle ran her hand across the sheet on the bed to smooth it out. She lifted her eyes to stare at the made bed. Her breath left her lips very slowly as a pain filled her. She tore her eyes away from the bed and she strolled over to the doorway of the washroom. She stopped in her walk to stare at her friend's ridged back.

Xena had her arms up and resting on the rim of the tub. Her back pressed against the side of the tub. She knew her partner was staring at her back and it only made her narrow her eyes.

The bard breathed deeply and walked up behind the warrior. Her hands came down to rest on the taller woman's shoulders. She felt how stiff they were to her touch. She squeezed them and walked around the tub. "How you feel?"

The warrior shrugged faintly.

The young woman slowly nodded and kneeled down to prop her arms up on the tub. Her chin lowered on her arms.

"Where'd you meet him?" The older woman locked eyes with her friend.

The bard glanced away but back to her friend. "Down in the tavern."

"His name?"

"Joseph."

Xena's head bobbed as she stared at the water. She felt herself begin to hate the name Joseph. A young man that had the opportunity to sleep with the woman she was in-love with. And she knew this farmer had no emotions towards Gabrielle nor had sex with her out of love. The anger fired through her knowing this. It's been three years that she's yearned to become Gabrielle's lover and now this has happened. It only enflamed her pain which in turn created the strong anger.

The Amazon Queen saw the conflicting emotions in her best friend's eyes. "Xena?"

Slowly the dark woman raised her cold eyes in question.

"Look..." Gabrielle stopped not sure how to approach this topic right. "I'm not sure how you feel about what happened. My guess is disappointed."

"A minor emotion," mumbled the warrior. She slowly closed her eyes and tried to relax in the warm water.

"Why are you so angry?" The small woman furrowed her eyebrows. "Xena, I can understand being some what angry but gods... you act like I killed a family member of yours."

Gradually the crystal blue eyes drifted open. "You want to know why I'm anger?" She paused knowing she wasn't about to reveal the total truth. So she went to semi-lie. "I

don't want you picking up my... habits."

"What?" Gabrielle shook her head while lifting her head. "What you think, I'm going to turn into you?" She laughed lowly. "I know I want to be a warrior but I don't do this on a daily basis," she hissed. Now she stood with her arms folded. "That's such centaur crap Xena."

The warrior's head slowly bobbed. She had to agree. She glanced up with a fake smile and started to nod again. "Yup, it's centaur shit."

The bard narrowed her eyes over the game being played between she and Xena. "Just forget it." She put her hands on the edge of the tub and leaned towards her friend. Her eyes were filled with anger. "It was never your business to begin with." She straightened up and walked out of the washroom.

The Warrior Princess rolled her head to crack her neck. She sighed a little and relaxed in the water again.

The younger woman closed her eyes as she made her way into the bedroom. Her right hand came up to pull back her strawberry blond bangs. Her eyes began to sting. *I don't want to fight with you Xena.* Her eyes shifted open with her tears on the brim of her eyes. *I can't do this, I can't fight with the women I'm in-love with.* She started to shake her head while dropping her hand. With a shaky breath, she made her way to the bed and crawled in. Her body curled up close with her eyes closing and she tried to sleep.

A little after a quarter of a candlemark Xena slipped out of the washroom in just her leathers. She stared over in the faintly torch lit room to her partner. She had such a combination of pain and anger. And right now she could only flash the scene of Joseph and Gabrielle in the bed together. Her mind would even toy with it and flash scenes of what their sex might have been together. Her eyes narrowed at the small form on the bed and she walked over to the table. She sat in one of the chairs, stretched her legs out, and dropped her head against the wall. Soon sleep began to take her with a torturing nightmare.

~*Part 2*~

"Gabrielle, get up." The Warrior Princess lifted the saddlebag onto her shoulders and stared at her small friend on the bed.

The bard sat up with blood shot eyes opened.

"Get ready to go." Xena walked over to the door and opened it. Her head turned to Gabrielle. "If you still want to hang around an angry warrior." She walked out coolly while closing the door a little roughly.

Gabrielle lifted her knees, wrapped her arms around her legs, and dropped her head down between arms.

The warrior walked down the steps with a heavy footfall. She left the tavern with the saddlebag and went to the tavern's stable. There she found Argo and began to tack up the mare.

The Amazon Queen slowly lifted her head to reveal red eyes. She took a shaky breath and hopped out of bed. Slowly with trembling hands she collect her personal

belongings. Last she grabbed her staff, breathed calmly, and walked down the steps. As soon as she made it to the tavern, she spotted Joseph. She sadly smiled to the young man.

Joseph power walked up to the bard. "Are you okay?" He put his hands to Gabrielle's sides.

"Yeah, yeah." The small woman looked to the floor then back up.

The farmer sighed sadly. "I knew that was going to happen." He shook his head. "I'm sorry Gabrielle."

"It's okay." Gabrielle licked her lips while her head bobbed. "Was bound to happen sometime."

The young man's expression went to worry. "Are you leaving with her?"

"I have to Joseph." The bard shook her head.

"I know... I know." The farmer sadly smiled. "I know how you feel about her." He saw the sudden confused look on the woman's face.

"You... you..."

"It's easy to tell." Joseph grinned for a second but went serious. "Just be careful Gabrielle." He reached up with his right hand to grasp the bard's left hand. "Being in-love can be dangerous sometimes."

"Even more when the other one doesn't feel the same way," mumbled Gabrielle. "She's pretty possessive huh?"

The farmer slowly nodded then gave a little laugh. "Yes, even physically possessive." He didn't hint it any farther of his knowledge. He had to let Gabrielle figure for herself that Xena was in-love with her just as much.

"Yeah she really is." Gabrielle turned her head to the right towards the two open doors of the tavern. She'd felt the blue eyes on her and now she saw her partner standing beside Argo.

Xena stared into the tavern to see Joseph holding the bard. She narrowed her eyes and turned to her right to walk off with Argo.

The Amazon Queen dropped her head and turned it towards the farmer. "I need to go."

"Be careful Gabrielle." The young man smiled warmly. "I enjoyed last night." He chuckled a little. "Had to say that."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle grinned. "Thank you for taking the risk." She tried to smile warmly. "Take care of yourself too."

"Of course." Joseph leaned down to kiss Gabrielle tenderly. He lifted his head back up slowly. "I'll see you." He released the small woman.

The bard faintly nodded at the lie. She flashed a smile and started walking towards the door. "Bye Joseph." She glanced back with her smile.

The farmer smiled back as she gave a small wave. "Take care Gabrielle."

"You too." The bard turned her head away as the smile slipped away. She briskly walked down the steps of the tavern and she came up to her partner's side.

"Ready?" The warrior peered down with a sarcastic expression.

The short woman's only response was by starting to walk with her scroll satchel and staff.

Xena cocked an eyebrow at her companion's back in interest. "Alright," she whispered to herself. She started walking as her emotionless frame of mind set in.

~*~*~*~

The entire trek along the road was deathly silent. Gabrielle walked ahead of her friend. Xena lead Argo with the reins in her strong walk. She kept her eyes pinned on the bard's back. The dark side of her wanted to snarl out words of pain out of anger yet she held back. She knew that would not solve the problem. However her dark side was starting to control her frame of mind that in time left an evil smile creeping along her lips.

Gabrielle had her head hung low. Xena may not be disappointed in her but she was in herself. Never had she before when she'd slept with the few other men in her past. But now that she'd been caught along with knowing her feelings for the warrior, it doubled her disappointment. She was to the extent of disappoint that she was furious with herself. Part of her was still anger at Xena for not understanding.

The pair kept walking at their fast pace. Neither was sure where they were headed but they never cared on this day.

Xena at first thought of making camp by early afternoon but then she had second thoughts. She remembered that not too far away there be another village. So she made it their destination for that night.

When the sun reached the western horizon the partners were reaching the new town. They went in side by side.

The bard said nothing nor shot a glance to her friend.

The warrior peered around in the town looking for a good tavern. She then finally found one and settled Argo in a stall. Afterwards she was climbing the steps with her friend and carrying the saddlebags. "We want a room." She stared coldly into the innkeeper's eyes.

The innkeeper frightfully smiled and nodded. "Of course." He paused. "It'll be five dinars."

Xena slowly nodded and reached into materialize the money. She handed it over.

"It's the room at the end of the hall." The innkeeper pointed.

The Warrior Princess narrowed her eyes and turned in that direction. She started walking towards the hall.

Gabrielle followed after shifting the strap on her shoulders. When she came in she settled her satchel on the table.

The older woman placed the saddlebags on the floor near the door. She slowly straightened up but didn't face her friend. "Let's get one thing clear." She turned around with a stoic expression. "Nobody but you or I are allowed in this room or any others in the future." She started to smile with a hidden evilness. "Agreed?"

The Amazon Queen peered up and began to nod. "Fine with me." She folded her arms. "This is going to go on for awhile... isn't it?"

The tall woman narrowed her eyes faintly.

"Why don't you tell me what's eating at you Xena?" The small woman dropped her arms as her expression went to concern. "And don't feed me the line that it wasn't safe or that I'll be you in that regard." She took a step closer.

The warrior said nothing and just studied her partner.

Gabrielle waited for a few moments then sighed in frustration. She threw up her hands. "I'm sorry I'm trying to fix things Xena." She took a few more steps as the anger grew. "I had right to do what I did." She pointed a finger. "Stop making it seem like I was a bitch for what I did."

Xena crossed her arms against her chest then she corked an eyebrow.

The Amazon Queen's head bobbed while she turned her head away. "Gods!" she yelled. Her head whipped back to her friend and her eyes were flashing. "This is so stupid!" Her hand came up to pull back her bangs. "What do you want me to do?"

An apology for starts. But the warrior's thought never left her lips. "Why don't you try figuring it out for yourself." She turned towards the door. "You say you're good at analyzing emotions." She opened the door and walked out. "See you for dinner."

Gabrielle growled quietly. She slammed the butt end of her staff on the wood floor, which only rid of a small level of her anger. She took a deep breath to calm. Slowly she walked out of the room and closed the door behind.

The pair sat across from each other in the sunset-lit tavern. The evening was quickly approaching. They'd ordered dinner and began to eat slowly. As they did the tavern became packed with customers. Some customers were villagers while other outsiders.

The bard finished eating and focused her attention to Xena after looking at all the people. "How are we with money?"

Xena shrugged while looking to her left. "Low." She spotted another female warrior sitting across the tavern.

"I'll see if I can do something about that." The young woman stood up, grabbed her staff, and walked over towards the bar to see the innkeeper.

The warrior watched her go for a second then looked to her left again at the other warrior.

That other warrior finally noticed the Warrior Princess looking over her. She smiled warmly to Xena and received one back.

The bard came back up near Xena. "Looks like I can do some storytelling for money." She peered down at her friend. She noticed that the older woman was taking notice to her and was staring at the another female warrior. Her eyes shut tightly then opened again as Xena looked up to her.

"Good." The dark woman folded her arms against her chest.

"Be back." The Amazon Queen touched her companions shoulder for a second then walked off to get in front of the tavern.

Xena shivered to the touch. A deep breath filled her lungs then she glanced to the other warrior once more.

The warrior patted the seat beside her in signal to Xena.

Xena grinned, grabbed her mug, and walked over to sit beside the other warrior. She stretched her legs out and asked, "Name?"

"Rhigos." The medium built warrior smiled warmly. "Yours?"

"Xena." The Warrior Princess lifted her mug to drink heavily. Her mug met the table.

Rhigos gestured her mug to the other warrior. "The famous Warrior Princess... heard of you." She grinned a little.

"Who hasn't?" Xena grinned. She glanced forward to see her best friend preparing to tell a story.

"A friend?" Rhigos nodded to the bard.

The taller warrior slowly nodded. "Of sorts." She lifted her mug to drink.

"Ah." Rhigos was a blond haired warrior. "Then she's not an... intimate friend?" Her hair went to her shoulders. Her eyes were deep hazels that were highlight by her roundish complexion.

Xena laughed deeply while shaking her head. "Hardly."

Gabrielle began to tell her story. For once it wasn't a story of Xena's adventures but of a pair of friends. She'd glanced to her best friend to see her sitting by that other warrior. In her storytelling she'd narrowed her eyes then glanced away. She didn't falter in her story. About halfway through the story she spotted Xena and Rhigos getting up together.

The dark warrior made her drank from her mug as she stood. She set her mug down on the table and turned to the other warrior with a grin.

Rhigos chuckled lightly then slowly smiled. "I'd say I have a few moves to show you." She leaned in to start a cautious kiss.

Gabrielle faltered in her story then stammered as she saw Xena deepen the kiss. She stopped for a moment, shook her head, smiled, and then continued with her story.

None of the listeners noticed the stumble in the bard's storytelling.

The two warriors walked over to the door of the tavern. Rhigos was first out and waiting outside.

Xena was coming out but stopped midway out of the door. She peered over to her partner and for once listened to what Gabrielle said.

"...and from there out, the best friends were thrown into a silent war between each other." Gabrielle's voice came out coldly and she paused after speaking. Her eyes were locked with Xena's.

The warrior could feel the sadness arise in her now. But her anger sparked as well. She wanted to get even so it led her to turn away and leave the tavern. She came up to Rhigos kissed her then started to walk off with her.

Gabrielle cried herself to sleep that night.

~*Part 3*~

Xena had a huge satisfied smile on her lips. She kept walking through the town headed back towards the tavern in the mid-morning. However her smile instantly dropped when she saw Gabrielle come out of the inn with red eyes and a pained expression.

The bard caught sight of the warrior coming. She didn't look directly at Xena and kept walking with her staff. She brushed past Xena and kept power walking off without a word or glance.

The Warrior Princess had stopped walking and turned around. Her eyes widen in fear as she realized Gabrielle was leaving her. The anger disappeared and the fear bursted forth. She went jogging after her friend.

Gabrielle could feel her partner coming after her. She made it out of the town when Xena's hand grabbed her arm.

"Where you going?"

"Where's it look like?" The small woman turned around.

They stared into each other's eyes in the middle of the forest. The wind lightly blew to brush back their bangs.

"Gabrielle you're not-"

"I am." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "I've had enough." She jerked her arm free.

"What?" hollered the warrior. She shook her head. "I see..." Her hands went to her hips. "It's perfectly fine for you to have sex with some young man but not for me to with a warrior."

The Amazon Queen felt tears rolled down her cheeks. "You crossed the line." She pointed a finger with hooded eyes. "You slept with a woman." She turned away and started walking again.

Xena stood shocked. She ran her hand through her dark hair. "Gabrielle, don't do this."

Once more the small woman stopped walking and turned around. "Don't even say that." She laughed sarcastically. "I have a Nation of women to run... and keep my bed warm." She turned around to continue walking off again.

"No," whispered the warrior. Her eyes blurred as her emotions came racing. They left her confused and closing her eyes. The only thing she understood was she couldn't let her best friend go. So she opened her eyes and broke off into a run. She stood tall in front of Gabrielle.

"Xena get out of my way." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes. "I want to go to my Amazons."

"I can't let you go Gabrielle." The tall woman crossed her arms against her chest.

The bard sighed, shook her head while side stepping Xena. She only found her path blocked by the warrior. "Xena, please move." She peered up with dark eyes, the anger was boiling up.

"No."

The short woman growled then said, "If you don't move I'll make you."

Xena's arms loosened against her chest. "I'm not moving."

"Xena!" Gabrielle swung her staff.

The Warrior Princess was prepared and caught the staff. She tore it from her friend's hands and tossed it to the ground. She quickly moved to lift Gabrielle up from the ground. She started walking back towards the village with her companion in arms.

"Xena put me down damn it." The young woman began to struggle against the warrior's hold. But she only found it harder to struggle as the arms tightened. "Xena let go."

The warrior didn't say anything but kept walking. Her expression was stoic and her eyes fixed ahead.

The bard started to feel frustrated, which would bring strong emotions easily. "What you going to do Xena? Tie me up and lead me around by a rope?" She laughed sarcastically. "What a good friendship that'll be."

Xena stopped walking and looked down into feral green eyes. Her emotions bubbled to the top and reappeared in her eyes and expression. It was her last desperate attempt at everything.

Gabrielle locked eyes. She was breathing heavy over the frustration. She studied the emotions in her friend's eyes and understood. Without warning she buried her head into Xena's chest with her arms wrapping around. Her pain came to life now. "Xena please, I don't want to do this." She started to cry and her voice came out quivering saying, "I'm sorry Xena. Please... I'm sorry... sorry." Her tears only became stronger.

The Warrior Princess closed her eyes, lowered her head, and kissed her friend's temple. "I'm sorry too." She started to cry with her friend. The emotions were so strong they took her to her knees in the soft grass. She pulled the bard up into her lap. Her head dug into Gabrielle as she continued to cry.

The women cried together, their bodies shook, and the emotions ran their courses.

~*~*~*~

The warrior slowly began to kneel with her best friend still in her arms. She settled Gabrielle onto a huge rock then stayed kneeling in front of the bard.

Gabrielle wiped away at her eyes. Her eyes were still stinging and were puffy from the long intense cry.

Xena herself felt the same way and could feel her body calm with her emotions. "You okay?" Her voice held strong worry.

"Yeah." The small woman nodded faintly and dropped her hands to her lap. "You?"

"Yeah," whispered the older woman. A sad smile broke out across her expression.

The Amazon Queen reflected the smile for a moment but dropped it. She brushed back her bangs. "Can we get the Hades out of here?" Her eyes still held hints of pain and fear.

"Yeah, let's get out of here." The Warrior Princess stood up and walked over to collect the staff.

Gabrielle stood up from the rock and wiped at her still sniffling nose. She shook her head and saw her partner coming up with her staff. "Thanks."

Xena released the staff after handing it over. "Let's go get our stuff and Argo."

The bard nodded and began the trek into the village with her companion.

The pair quickly gathered their belongings, tacked the war-horse, and then was making their way out of the village.

The younger woman kept silent as she thought of the past two days. As she kept thinking about her actions, she kept regretting them. Her pace picked up and she went past Xena. She kept her head high as warm tears gently rolled down her cheeks.

Xena narrowed her eyes in suspicion over her friend's fast walk. "Gabrielle," she whispered. She got no response and knew powerful feelings were taking her friend. She tugged on Argo's reins to stop the mare. She then jogged up to her friend and put her hands on Gabrielle's shoulders to stop her.

The bard did stop walking and just dropped her head without turning around.

The warrior squeezed the small shoulders gently. "Let's not do this." She lowered her head close to Gabrielle's. "No games."

Gabrielle's breath was shaky as she turned around with droplets flowing down her face. "Then what are we going to do?" She laughed in ridicule at herself more than

anything. "It seems to be my best department."

Xena started to grin a little. "Maybe both of us are huh?"

A halfhearted grin came over the bard's lips. "Yeah," she said quietly. Her head turned away. "Doesn't help us much."

"Nnno but..." The tall woman gave a warm smile. "We're both good at understanding each other... when we want to."

"Step one," Gabrielle whispered but started to nod. "Well, its better then fighting." She peered up with concerned eyes for agreement.

"Exactly." The warrior stopped as she considered for a second. "Let's just take some thinking time huh?" She glanced back to Argo and gave a small whistle.

The mare whined and trotted up to her owner to have her reins taken.

After Xena took the reins, she mounted the horse. She held out her hand. "Come on."

The Amazon Queen took another step. Her hand clasped Xena's and found herself hauled up into the saddle. She kept a hold of her staff and wrapped one arm around her partner.

The older woman patted the small hand over her stomach. "Just relax." She felt the bard leaned against her back. So she kicked Argo lightly in the side to send the horse into a walk.

Gabrielle became lost into her thoughts of Xena. She tried to reverse her role and become the warrior for the past two days. That's when she began to understand Xena's words, reactions, and emotions the past days.

Xena, herself, did the same. She became Gabrielle those two days. She soon had that understanding and regard from the bard's side. It even rid her anger for Joseph, she forgave Joseph for he helped the bard in the end and that's what mattered to Xena. And it left her amazed she could forgive to that extent. It was all in perspective.

The two women continued thinking through the ride. The anger, jealousy, and pain soon settled but remained alive. For wounds need proper cleaning.

By that early evening they were stopping to make camp. Setting up camp was done in a majority of silence. Dinner was done the same way.

Gabrielle soon found herself staring into the fire. She stood next to it, her eyes locked on the flames.

Xena walked into the camp after doing the usual check of the area. She came up beside her partner and stared into the fire as well. "How you feel?" she asked quietly.

The bard slightly shrugged. "Alive." She peered up to her friend. "You?"

The warrior slowly nodded. "The same." She went quiet but spoke again in an usher. "But I'm glad to be alive." She turned her head to Gabrielle gradually while a fine smile creased her lips.

The small woman mirrored the smile and reached out with her left hand to grasp the stronger arm. "Me too."

The warrior kept her warm expression but eventually went serious. "Let's try a little tender love and care on these wounds." She took her friend's hand and led away from the fire a little. She settled down on the ground and pulled her companion down.

Gabrielle followed the command and sat in the warrior's lap. She instantly found strong arms around her in protection. Her body stiffened.

Xena leaned her head into Gabrielle's. "No game," promised the warrior. "We both need to relax."

The short woman's head moved in complete agreement. She leaned into her best friend while sighing contently. She glanced down at the grass and now began to pluck at some of it. "You know it was pretty stupid what I did..." She paused. "Have been doing," she corrected then added, "Sleeping with guys."

The older woman shrugged. "If you say that then you're calling me stupid too."

The bard chuckled a little. "That's true." She left the grass be and added, "Xena and stupid don't equal each other."

"Definitely not."

The women laughed together for the first time in days.

The Amazon Queen smiled faintly while settling back into her friend's warm body. "Felt good to laugh."

"And with you."

Gabrielle chuckled a little then smiled. She tilted her head back and saw warm blue eyes lower to her. It caused a smile to escape over her expression.

The smile slipped into the warrior's expression. As their eyes locked, she let her right hand come up to her friend's cheek. Her left hand slipped more onto the bard's stomach to warm there.

The young woman became hypnotized. Her eyes closed slowly.

Xena began to lean down and close her eyes. Her lips gently touched the other woman's.

Gabrielle faintly moaned and one of her hands covered over Xena's at her stomach.

The warrior placed more need into the kiss.

The bard gave and then tried her own demand.

The older woman gave. She slipped her hand behind Gabrielle's head to open her mouth.

The Amazon Queen opened her mouth and felt a warm tongue slip in. Her own tongue slid over Xena's then into the other warm mouth.

The two women kept that kiss for long as they could. But air became a large need. So they began to break away.

However Xena didn't leave it at that. She'd ended the kiss with sucking on the bard's lower lip then fully pulled back.

Gabrielle slowly opened her eyes and found darker blue ones peering down at her. Then the realization kicked in on her.

The Warrior Princess saw it coming and prepared herself.

The bard sprung up out of Xena's arms and shook her body. "Woo." She ran her hands through her hair as she walked over the opposite side of the camp. "That was to fast." She turned around to see her friend standing.

The older woman laughed a little out of nervousness. "Yeah you're right." Her right hand came up to press against her forehead. "It was wonderful but fast."

"Uh huh." Gabrielle came to the edge of the camp in the dark of the night. She stood near a brush and breathed in rhythm to calm her body's desires.

Xena, well she was on the opposite side of the camp from Gabrielle. Her hands on her hips, her head dropped back, and staring at the treetops as she tried to relax her body from the strong passion.

Gabrielle turned around slow to see her friend trying to control her body as well. "I think I'm good." She bobbed her head. "I'm good." She laughed it off. "You stay on that side and I'll stay on this side."

The dark woman lowered her head and flashed a grin. "I'll meet you halfway in a second."

"I can do that." The bard's chest rose high as it all escaped as a sigh. "We need to talk about this." She relaxed now. "This is sssso confusing." She started walking back to the middle of the camp.

Xena nodded in agreement about her friend's words earlier. She started sauntering up towards her partner.

They met half way in front of the fire. Each shyly smiled but went serious when they sat down so that their knees touched.

"Okay..." The bard trailed off not sure how to begin this talk. She stared at the green-yellow grass. "Um, where we start?" She lifted her eyes to Xena.

The warrior sighed as she sat crossed legged in front of her companion. "Let's get some things unconfused."

"Yeah." The young woman fisted up her left hand and tapped it against the other woman's knee. She sighed and asked, "Maybe I should explain myself huh?" She peeked up to her friend once more.

Xena shrugged a little. "You don't have to. I sort of understand... I do it myself." She grinned now.

Gabrielle grinned for all of two seconds but lost it. "Okay..." She breathed calmly. "I think I started sleeping with strangers about a year ago." She cringed while waiting for the explosion from her friend, it never came.

The older woman tilted her head to the left a little. "And why?"

The bard wasn't sure if she wanted to tell but she wanted to so that it would end the confusion. "Because over two and half years ago I realized I was in-love with you." She dropped her eyes. "You don't understand how hard it is to travel beside you." She sighed a little. "And I don't mean in the way of partnership." She lifted her hooded eyes. "But I mean just being physically near and alone on the roads. I get so dazed and distracted, can't focused." She grinned a little. "I'm lucky I've only slept with three men in the past year."

Xena slowly corked an eyebrow. "Three?" She started to evilly grin. "I'm must be losing my touch." She saw her friend get a confused look. "If I'm only driving you to have sex with three men that's bad."

Gabrielle laughed yet went serious for a second. "Yeah well that was only men," she mumbled.

"Women too?"

"Oh no," was the small woman's fast response. She shook her head. "I couldn't do that."

"And why?" The warrior's elbows rested on her knees and her hands in her lap.

The young woman grinned but was serious in tone. "Because I wanted to save up for the best... or at least hope for it."

The Warrior Princess gradually nodded in understanding. "That's why I slept with a lot of strangers too." She sighed as she shook her head. "Thought I could drown out my desire for you." She grinned at the bard. "Only made it worse I came to find out."

"Yeah?" Gabrielle furrowed her eyebrows while nodding. "Same here." She chuckled. "Isn't it so annoying?"

Xena laughed then shook her head while gazing down. "Frustrating," she whispered.

"Uh huh." The bard sighed a little. "So now what?" She lost any sort of happiness in her voice. "As much as I'd like to jump you now... I still..." She looked away.

"Feel hurt?" The warrior reached out to squeeze her friend's knee. "Same here." She sighed sadly.

The small woman looked back quickly. "And it's not even what you said or did these two days but more because of what I did." She shook her head. "I feel... nasty for what I did." She laughed bitterly. "I feel like I've cheated on you even though we're not together."

The tall woman's head swayed a little. "Me too." She ran her hand through her bangs. "Look either way it's fifty-fifty." She looked with intense eyes. "We're even and we were never together to begin with." She shrugged. "And we both know we want to..."

jump each other."

A laugh came from Gabrielle. "That's a good thing... very good." She smiled but sighed. "We'll hold back on the jumping each other till later."

"So, you're saying we're together Gabrielle?" The warrior carked an eyebrow with a grin.

Gabrielle quickly looked up with a worried look. "I am... are you?"

Xena dropped her arms back behind her so she propped her upper body. She leaned against her hands as she studied her friend. Slowly a grin etched its way across her lips. "Yeah," she whispered. Suddenly she found Gabrielle bounding into her. So she fell onto her back with the younger woman on top of her. Her arms went around the bard.

Gabrielle laughed a little and buried her head into the warrior's neck.

The Warrior Princess started to grin again. "I thought we were jumping later?"

"Yeah." The blond lifted her head as an amused look took over. "But I jumped into you... not on you."

"Oooh." The warrior nodded in acceptance and closed her eyes.

"So are we sleeping here and like this?" The bard poked her friend in the ribs.

Xena momentarily groaned from the poke. "No." She sighed a little. "Let's try the bedrolls. Are you tired?"

The bard lifted her head. "Yeah, haven't barely slept these two nights." She realized what she was saying and turned her head away.

The warrior caught this and lifted her hand to Gabrielle's opposite cheek. She brought her friend's face back towards her. "Let me make it up to you? Deal?"

"As long as I can to you?" Gabrielle carked an eyebrow. She knew that would require for her friend to sleep in late tomorrow morning.

Slowly a warm smile eased along the older woman's face. "Wouldn't have it any other way."

"Perfect." The small woman carefully got up to stand. She then clasped her hands together and raised them above her head to stretch.

Xena stood up slowly and breathed calmly at seeing the scene of the bard arching her body out. She reached up to grasp her friend's hands. She locked eyes. "Let's make one thing clear." Her expression was dead pan serious.

Gabrielle had a worry look as her arms lowered with Xena's hands over hers. She slowly nodded.

"You are mine Gabrielle." The warrior's serious expression never shifted. "That means you don't sleep with anybody else." A hint of a grin tweaked her lips.

The bard raised an eyebrow slowly. "Let's make clear that you're not to sleep with

anybody Xena but with me." She started to smirk. "And don't even have... sex with yourself."

Xena's eyes widen. "What?" She said a little loudly. She dropped her shoulders. "That's a nightly ritual."

The young woman stood shock as she saw her warrior stroll off to the other side of the fire. She had a smug look now. "Oooh now I know what *you do* during those patrol walks." She narrowed her eyes in suspicion.

The older woman laughed as she tossed some wood into the fire. "You found me out." She evilly grinned. Her eyes looked extra devilish from the fire's reflection.

Gabrielle stared becoming captured by the firelight dancing over her friend's body. Finally she responded with a tease. "Next time you'll have to take me on one of those patrol walks."

An evil laugh came from the Warrior Princess. "Oh, I will." She came around the fire to her bard. Now a smile controlled her lips. "Let's get some sleep huh?"

"Yeah." The Amazon Queen walked over to the bedrolls with her partner and finally felt the day catch up. Her right hand ruffled her hair as she knelt down to unlace her boots.

The warrior did the same as well as took her armor off then her weapons. Soon she settled into the bedroll beside her friend with a content sigh. "How you feel?"

"A lot better." Gabrielle turned her head to her warrior. "Talk about from one extreme to the other today."

"Yeah." The tall woman crossed her legs at the ankles. "Weird huh?"

"I'm getting use to it after three years." The short woman smirked to her partner. "Everyday with you is an adventure."

"Gee thanks." Xena started to laugh. "But it's true."

"Isn't it?" The bard sucked in a long breath then slowly released it. "We have such a fast pace lifestyle."

"Yeah well... I can tell you the sex between us won't be quite as fast," she mumbled.

"What?" Gabrielle whipped her head to the right. She repeated herself. "What?"

The older woman laughed as she placed her hands under her head. "Hey, I'm savoring it."

The Queen snickered as her hands went to her stomach. "Now I can understand that."

The warrior rolled to her left onto her side and peered down at her bard. "Gabrielle?"

Gabrielle caught the serious look and tone. "Yeah?" She reached over with one hand to grasp one of Xena's.

"There's something else we need to make clear." Xena had a grin but wiped it away. "This isn't just a physical thing." She brushed back blond bangs. "I was serious, I am

in-love with you. And I don't want you thinking that I just... lust for you and that's it." She smiled warmly. "It's deeper than that."

"Deep huh?" Gabrielle smiled warmly. "Tell me how far deep this is for you Xena."

"Right to the soul."

The bard searched her friend's eyes seeing every bit of truth in it. "Through and through." She squeezed her friend's hand tightly. "Right to my body, emotions, heart, and soul you have me."

Xena squeezed the hand back tightly as well. She began to smile with twinkling blue eyes. "Just the way I like it." She leaned down to tenderly kiss her bard. Slowly she lifted her head back up. She pressed her lips against her partner's cheek and whispered, "Sleep time."

Gabrielle chuckled. "Yeah, way past my bedtime." She kissed her warrior lightly and rolled to her right into Xena's arms.

Snuggling into each other the pair quickly found sleep. A long and hard sleep that night.

~*Part 4*~

The sun streamed through the trees in the early morning mist from the east. The sun warmed the two locked bodies in the small camp. In turn this made the pair awake together.

The bard stretched in her partner's arms. She then tucked her head back under her warrior's head.

Slowly blue eyes revealed to the world. "Mmm, time to rise and shine."

"Like I've said," mumbled the bard, "I rise but I don't shine." Her arms then suddenly tightened around the older woman. "Go back to sleep, we had a deal."

The warrior soon had a grin spreading across her expression. "True."

"Uh huh, so go back to sleep." Gabrielle threw her top leg over Xena's legs to emphasis the need to sleep.

"Alright," whispered the warrior. She kissed her bard's forehead then closed her eyes.

Soon the partners were back to sleep. They slept till late into that morning. Once they did rise from their bedrolls they felt refreshed and ready to take on the day.

Xena kicked a little bit of dirt over the dead fire after smoldering it earlier.

Gabrielle peered up to her warrior while kneeling down to tie her boots. "Where we headed?"

The older woman shrugged and put her hands on her hips. "Well... we're about midway between Athens and the Amazons. Feel like either?"

"You're joking?" The Amazon Queen raised an eyebrow. "I'd love to see the Amazons or go to Athens but... things have been crazy enough." She glanced back to her tying

of boots. "We don't need that."

"Yeah." Xena lowered her arms and strolled over to her mare to tack the horse up.
"Any suggestions?"

"I don't know." The young woman stood up and came up behind her friend. At first she wasn't sure of the idea but went ahead with it. She slipped her arms around Xena's waist and pulled her in.

The tall woman smiled and released the strap for the stirrups. She leaned back into her bard. Her hands covered Gabrielle's. "No suggestions?"

Gabrielle lowered her head onto Xena's back deciding this was a good idea. "Mmm, how about we just relax and spend time alone?"

"That'll be hard," huffed the warrior with a glare.

The small woman sighed. "Don't remind me. If we don't go looking for trouble, it'll find us."

Xena chuckled. "Yeah really." She slowly sighed. "I think I may have some ideas."

"Yeah?"

"Uh huh." The Warrior Princess turned in the small arms and pulled her bard in.
"Gamed?"

"Always." Gabrielle hugged her partner tightly. "Let me get my stuff."

"Alright, I'll take care of Argo." Xena's right hand came under her companion's chin to tilt her head up. She leaned down.

The bard felt warm lips cover hers in a delicate kiss. When she pulled back she saw a loving smile on her warrior's face. She chuckled with a smile and left her safe haven in her friend's arms.

The warrior turned back to her war-horse to finish with the tacking.

Within a few minutes the pair were on the road traveling again. They hadn't eaten breakfast and figured since it was so late in the morning they'd wait till lunching hours. About midway through the trek Gabrielle disappeared into the forest for a relief moment.

Xena had shifted to the saddlebags and start checking a few things. Afterwards she grasped the reins again and spotted out of the corner of her eye a warrior coming down the road towards her. Even from this distance she could tell this person wasn't nice. She turned to face the person coming towards her.

The newcomer came right up to Xena and narrowed their eyes. "And who are you?"
The man put his hands to his hips. He was fairly rugged looking and rather filthy.

"Xena." The warrior took a step towards him.

"The Warrior Princess?" The warrior laughed as he quickly reached back to unsheathe his sword. "I am... was the warlord Harris."

"And your point is?" The warrior Princess folded her arms against her chest. Behind she the ex-warlord she spotted her partner coming out of the woods.

"Well, my reputation has gone down the drain." Harris pointed his sword at the warrior. "If I kill you I can get it back."

"Then you mind as well considered you reputation screwed." Xena corked an eyebrow with her coolly attitude.

Gabrielle grinned as she snuck silently up behind the man. She raised her staff while still taking steps towards the warlord.

"No, yours is." Harris raised his sword. He went stiff as the Amazon Queen's staff made hard contact with the back of his head. Slowly his eyes rolled back up into his head as the crack echoed down the road. He fell forward.

Xena bent her knees and jumped back as the warlord crashed to the ground. She looked down to see the man's head touching the tips of her boots.

"Who was that?" Gabrielle was leaning against her staff gazing at Xena.

"The warlord Harris... or ex-warlord." Xena shrugged and looked up.

The bard slowly nodded and looked down at the man then to Xena. "That's nice."

The warrior corked an eyebrow. "You ready to go?"

"Yup." The Amazon Queen straightened up as she turned to face the way they were headed.

Xena smiled. "Let's go." She unfolded her arms and walked on the warlord as if he were a rug. She grabbed her mare's reins and started walking down the road with her partner. "So what you feel like for lunch?"

"Fish sound good?"

The taller woman chuckled. "Wonderful to me."

~*~*~*~

Xena slowly reclined and found her head resting on her bard's warm stomach. She stretched out her legs while breathing deeply. Her tongue ran along the inside of her bottom teeth. She could still taste the hints of rockfish in her mouth.

Gabrielle's right hand rested on the warrior's chest. She brought her left hand to Xena's shoulder to caress there. She was laying on her back in the green grass in the open field.

The older woman herself was laying down with, of course, her head on Gabrielle's stomach. Her left hand had came up to lace with Gabrielle's hand.

"That one looks like a dragon." The young woman turned her head a little while chuckling.

"Sort of." Xena stared at the dragon like cloud. "Mmm, more like a wolf."

"A wolf, where you get a wolf out of that cloud?"

"Well see..." The large hand began to point in direction. "There's the ears, the tail, and the body."

"That's one deformed body."

"So was your dragon." Her hand fell back to her stomach.

Gabrielle snickered for a second. "It is now because the cloud is reshaping."

"No, it was just deformed."

"Ha ha." Gabrielle grumbled as she continued caressing her warrior's shoulder. "How about that one?" She pointed then returned her hand.

"Mmm." The dark woman considered. "A dog."

"Are you having a canine fetish?" The bard snickered.

The older woman chuckled for a second then asked, "What's it look like to you?"

"It reminds me of..." The small woman chuckled. "A small Argo."

"I could see that... pony version."

"Yeah." Gabrielle nodded in agreement. She forgot about the cloud watching for a moment. "You know what these large clouds mean?"

"Uh huh, we're sleeping in a cave tonight." Xena sighed a little. "I think I know where one is."

"Yeah, where you and your army use to go after battles to heal the wounded."

"No actually to keep extra supplies," said the warrior smugly.

The young woman quietly laughed with a smile. "My mistake," she whispered.

The warrior grinned while taking a deep breath. "Then again, it might not rain."

"Hasn't rained in awhile anyway." Gabrielle squeezed her warrior's hand. "We're doing well huh?"

Xena slowly let a warm smile cross her lips. "Yeah," she whispered.

"Mmm, maybe my nightfall we'll be jumping each other."

"Right," the warrior sarcastically responded.

"One can dream." The bard chuckled while taking a deep breath. She then felt her partner roll onto her stomach.

Xena rested the side of her head on her bard's stomach again. She brought her arms over Gabrielle's stomach like she was a pillow. "This is comfortable."

"So I noticed." Gabrielle lifted her head to see her friend's eyes closed. "Real

relaxing." She chuckled and lowered her head again. Her hands were on Xena's back massaging a little.

The warrior moaned quietly. "Keep it up and I'll be asleep."

The bard stopped massaging.

"Gabrielle," growled the Warrior Princess.

The young woman smirked and went back to the massaging the upper back. She sighed a little then started to chuckle. "I still can't believe you caught me."

Xena lifted her head with a corked eyebrow. "You mean with Joseph?"

"Uh huh... well just in general."

The tall woman sighed dramatically while lowering her head back down. "Next time invite me."

The young woman laughed and let her breath out slowly. "If I'd known I could I would have." She lost her grin. "I wish I did know."

Xena felt the sensitiveness coming in. "Better later than never."

"I should have never done it."

The dark woman shrugged. "I did it." She squeezed her bard. "It shouldn't matter in the end."

"Why?" quietly asked the bard.

"Because..." The Warrior Princess lifted her head to lock eyes. "What matters is that we can forgive and forget." She smiled warmly. "Could have been a worse situation."

"True." Gabrielle smiled sadly.

Xena lowered her head again but before placed a kiss to Gabrielle's stomach. Once her head was down, her eyes closed again. The massage continued on her back.

~*~*~*~

"So, you don't think we get to jump each other tonight?" The bard evilly grinned to her partner.

Xena laughed while walking down the road. "Mmm, let's see who can last longer."

"Right." Gabrielle grinned. "I lose, let's get it on."

"I don't think so." The warrior grinned now.

"Oh come on." The young woman quickly reached out to try and grab her friend.

The tall woman jumped away and started to put distance between her and Gabrielle. She wagged her index finger at her bard. "Tsk tsk, not yet. Wait till the... ripe moment."

The Amazon Queen evilly grinned. "Yeah well, I wanna pluck now." She laughed

evilily. "What you gonna do anyway huh?"

Xena's turned to evilily grin. "I'll tie your hands."

"Oooh." Gabrielle narrowed her eyes with her grin. "And what you gonna do about my tongue?"

Xena's eyes widen and she laughed. "I'll figure something out."

"Yeah well I can figure out perfect something out to do with it." The small woman walked over to her partner.

The warrior stopped walking and dropped the reins in the late afternoon. She grabbed her bard's hand and held them to their sides. "I can tell this will be bad." She lowered her head close to Gabrielle's.

"Oh?" The bard grinned. "A good bad or an evil bad?"

"Both." The tall woman brushed her lips over Gabrielle's and saw her friend close her eyes. She then lifted her head to start walking again after getting the reins. "Better keep moving before the storm comes."

Gabrielle's head started to bob as she narrowed her eyes at her warrior's back. "Oh, the storm already came," she whispered. Power walking she caught up to her partner.

~*~*~*~

Xena found herself slammed up against the cavern wall as lightening stuck and thunder rolled. She gazed down into dark green eyes. "Lack of control?"

Gabrielle slowly raised an eyebrow. "Never." She pressed her body more into Xena's. "You?"

"Completely under control."

"Sure," was the mocked reply.

Lightening flashed again which lit the inside of the cavern.

The warrior just grinned while lowering head to kiss her bard gently. "Wait this out huh?"

The bard wrapped her arms around her partner tightly. She took in a large breath to calm herself. "Yeah I'm sure if we started our relationship as, "I love you. Let's have sex." Wouldn't be such a great relationship in the long run."

"That's my thinking." Xena lowered her head onto Gabrielle's while whispering, "Not that I don't find you incredible."

"Not quite like you." Gabrielle smiled to herself. "Xena?"

"Yeah?"

The bard took a deep breath and whispered, "I'm sorry." She gazed up to her partner. "I never thought any of that would happen." Her eyes lowered. "Never thought you

would be in-love with me."

Xena closed her eyes for a moment. "In a way I'm glad it happened." She opened her eyes. "Otherwise we wouldn't be at this point now."

Gabrielle peered up again. "We would have just kept having sleeping with anybody and fall into a system. Instead of ever telling each how we feel huh?"

"Yeah." The warrior brushed back her bard's hair. Her hand came back down. "What happened to the two friends at the end of your story?"

The small woman slowly began to smile. "They became so hurt by the other's action and finally told their emotions. They realized they were soulmates."

"Sounds like another couple I know." Xena grinned but her eyes were warm.

"Yeah me too." Gabrielle had a thinking look. "Wonder who though."

The tall woman laughed. "Maybe that bard and warrior huh?"

"I think that's the couple." The young woman chuckled with a smile. "That are so stubborn."

The dark woman chuckled but lost her happiness.

The rain drops fell down outside.

The Amazon Queen suddenly had a worried look. "What is it?"

"I was a pretty big bitch the other night huh?" Xena sighed deeply.

Gabrielle furrowed her eyebrows and thought back to the night her partner was referring her. The lightening and thunder flashed and roared. She realized and dropped her confused look. "Xena, I deserved it. I don't blame you for sleeping with that warrior."

Xena started to shake her head. "I should have gone about it differently instead of trying to hurt you as well."

"Like I said, I deserved it."

"That's not true." The Warrior Princess narrowed her eyes as the thunder rumbled. "I should have talked to you."

The small woman grasped her warrior's arms. She held tightly. "Xena, it's over. I don't blame you at all. Let's just let go of it huh?"

Slowly the tall woman nodded with a fine smile taking her lips. "Yeah."

The bard's rare loving bright smile took control. "Thank you." She paused. "You know what?"

"Mmm?"

"I love you."

Xena's eyes were twinkling warmly as her smile went from small to brilliant. "I love you too, Gabrielle." She leaned down to capture her bard's lips.

Gabrielle gently moaned in the kiss as she was taken into a world of pure love and Xena went with her. This was all that mattered.

The End